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SUBJECT: FUNDING REQUEST FOR AI HEALTH AWARENESS PSAS

REF: A. STATE 05323

[1](#)B. BAKU 00203

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. Per ref A announcement, Embassy Yerevan would like to request USD 50,000 for the development and broadcast of television Public Service Announcements (PSAs) on health and food safety issues related to Avian Influenza. While UNICEF and others have produced posters and leaflets targeted at children and poultry producers, television PSAs would reach a much broader audience. Although AI continues to be a serious threat to the region, especially in our neighboring countries of Turkey and Azerbaijan, Armenian concern about the virus has considerably lessened in recent months. We believe that now is an important time to raise public awareness about AI health issues in the broader population.

[1](#)2. Using television as a means of communication will allow us to remind Armenians throughout the country how to avoid behavior that could put them at risk to AI without causing general panic. Television is perhaps the most effective means of reaching the general population in Armenia. As a November, 2006 IRI poll revealed, 97 percent of Armenians receive their information from television. The PSAs will draw on messages already developed and tested in Armenia by UNICEF and other organizations on such general hygiene topics as food handling, hand washing, and safe treatment of birds and poultry. By using messages already tested in-country, we will ensure that the PSAs will not create unnecessary concern or panic. In addition, the PSAs will be developed in consultation with the GOAM. USD 10,000 of the funding will finance the development of a series of four to five PSAs by a local production company, and the remaining USD 40,000 will fund the broadcast of the PSAs on approximately two Yerevan-based television stations and three regional stations. We plan that the PSAs will be aired three times a day for two months.

[1](#)3. While Armenia has not yet reported any cases of H5N1, two of its four neighboring countries--Turkey and Azerbaijan--have reported human cases. Armenia's other two neighbors--Iran and Georgia--have reported animal cases. Outbreaks in the region are continuing to be identified. In the first half of February, 2007 alone, Turkey announced an AI outbreak at a farm in Batman province approximately 375 km from Armenia, and Azeri TV announced that AI had been found in the bodies of several dead birds in Neftcala, approximately 230 km from the Armenian border. (Note: Per ref B, the GOAJ said the information was incorrect and denied an AI outbreak. An FAO consultant will travel to the region to investigate. End note.)

[1](#)4. While these instances show that AI has been found on virtually

every side of Armenia, much of the Armenian population continues to believe that the country is somehow immune to the virus. The Misconception that Armenia is somehow different from its neighbors is prevalent, causing people to believe that the virus is not a threat to them. While AI was covered broadly by the Armenian press in early 2006 when the virus first became a major issue in Turkey, there has been a steady decline in interest and information about the issue in Armenia. As AI continues to be a threat to the region, we believe that now is an essential time to focus on AI public diplomacy efforts.

GODFREY